



# *News Release*

**North Dakota District Office**

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**Contact:** Sheri Weston, (701)239-5131x.210  
**E-mail Address:** [sheri.weston@sba.gov](mailto:sheri.weston@sba.gov)

## **Grand Forks Area Businesses Receive Awards** *Small Business Recognition Luncheon Held May 18, 2005*

**FARGO** – Two Grand Forks community businesses were honored by the U.S. Small Business Administration at a Small Business Recognition Luncheon, hosted by the Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce, on Wednesday, May 18, 2005 at the Grand Forks Holiday Inn.

Jo Ann Renfrow, President of J & G Landscaping, Inc. in Emerado was honored as the *U.S. Small Business Administration's 2005 Region VIII Prime Contractor of the Year*. Awarded annually, the designation recognizes small businesses that have provided the government with outstanding goods and services as prime contractors. Only federal agencies may nominate a small business for the award. Duane Mann, Director of Business Opportunities, Graham Prichett, Acquisition Flight Chief, and Marsha Williamson, Contract Specialist at the Grand Forks Air Force Base nominated J & G Landscaping for the award. J & G was selected after a region-wide competition. SBA's Region VIII consists of Colorado, Montana, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming, and North Dakota.

Renfrow was also honored as the *U.S. Small Business Administration 2005 North Dakota Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year*. Awarded annually, the designation recognizes individuals who have fulfilled a commitment to advancing small business opportunities for veterans of the U.S. armed forces. The Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce nominated Renfrow for the award. Renfrow was selected after a statewide competition.

Renfrow started J & G Landscaping in 1979 with only a wheelbarrow, a few shovels and rakes, and her oldest son, Kelly, as the only employee. Seeing an opportunity for growth, Renfrow became certified with the State of North Dakota as a woman-owned business. This

certification led to contracts with state and federal agencies, including a grounds maintenance service contract at the Grand Forks Air Force Base. In 1989, the company obtained a SBA Disaster Loan. “The SBA helped us to stay in business during the drought, which is a difficult time for a landscaping business,” said Renfrow. SBA disaster loans help business meet the necessary financial obligations that they could have met had the disaster not occurred. In addition to employing many veterans and their dependants at J & G Landscaping, Renfrow is an advocate for the Grand Forks Air Force Base and serves as a member of the Base Retention Committee. Renfrow’s success and civic involvement has been recognized by her ongoing position as an Honorary Commander of the 319<sup>th</sup> Refueling Wing at the Grand Forks Air Force Base. Today, the company employs up to 70 employees during the peak landscaping season.

Kevin Ritterman, President of Dakota Commercial & Development Company in Grand Forks was honored as the *U.S. Small Business Administration’s 2005 North Dakota Financial Services Champion of the Year*. Awarded annually, the designation recognizes individuals who assist small businesses through advocacy efforts to increase the usefulness and availability of accounting or financial services. The Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce nominated Ritterman for the award. Ritterman was selected after a statewide competition.

Kevin Ritterman is the President and Principle Broker of Dakota Commercial & Development Co. Ritterman purchased the company in 1997. Dakota Commercial & Development Co. provides real estate brokerage, development, property management and construction management services. Ritterman is a member of the Commercial Investment Real Estate Institute and is active in the community as a member of the Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce, Board of Realtors, Downtown Parking Authority, and serves on two community development committees: the Task Force on Economic Development and the Subcommittee Reimagining Downtown Development.

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